



The First Jagin

A **STUDYGUIDE** BY FIONA HALL



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

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Overview

When Charles Dickens created the character of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, he gave birth to one of the most infamous characters in English literature. Some writers claim that Dickens' portrait of Fagin drew inspiration from the life of the Jewish receiver and fencer of stolen goods, Ikey Solomon. Much has been written about Ikey's exploits: his amazing and daring prison escapes have captured people's imaginations through the generations.

The First Fagin recreates the life of Ikey Solomon, the most famous criminal of his age. From London's dens of vice, to Newgate jail to Australia's prison shores, Ikey takes us on a journey into crime, punishment, adventure and love whilst struggling against the harsh penal system of 19th century England.

Curriculum Links

The curriculum areas that this film could be related to include:

SOSE
English
Civics
History
Media Studies

The Australian National Curriculum (History) at Year 9 provides a study of the history of 'The Making of the Modern World' from 1750 to 1918. Overview content for this Unit includes:

The nature and significance of the Industrial Revolution and how it affected living and working conditions, including within Australia.

The nature and extent of the movement of peoples in the period (slaves, convicts and settlers).

Furthermore, Depth Study 1: 'The Industrial Revolution 1750 - 1914' focuses specifically on the causes and impacts of the Industrial Revolution, including population movement during this time and the experiences of men, women and children during this era.

The First Fagin provides an excellent case study of a family's experiences during this time frame, both in London and in colonial Australia.

Context of the Film

Before viewing the film, students may benefit from conducting some research to place the issues raised into some form of historical context. Ikey Solomon was born in 1785 in East London; a time and place of rapid social and economic change. The population of Britain had grown from around five million people in 1700 to nearly nine million by 1801.

Visit the British Library site at: www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/georgians/cities/riseofcities.html

Read about the rise of cities and crime and punishment during this time.



Timeline of Events

DATE	EVENT
1785	<p>Ikey is born in Houndsditch, East London, one of nine children. His father, Henry Solomon, was a receiver of stolen goods (known as a 'fence') and introduced Ikey to the criminal trade.</p> <p>Ikey marries Hannah (Ann) Julian.</p>
1807	<p>Ikey, along with accomplice Joel Joseph, is caught stealing outside Westminster Hall in London. Both men are arrested and tried at the Old Bailey.</p>
1810	<p>Ikey is found guilty of stealing and is sentenced to 14 years imprisonment on the prison-hulk <i>Zetland</i>.</p> <p>Six years into his sentence, Ikey is mistakenly released. He admits the error and returns, only to be granted a full pardon two months later.</p>
1816	<p>Ikey goes home to Ann and moves into the trading of second-hand goods.</p> <p>Ikey's legitimate trade is as a second-hand dealer, although he also becomes the most sought after dealer of stolen goods in London.</p>
1816 – 1827	<p>By 1827, Ikey and Ann have five children and Ann is pregnant with their sixth.</p> <p>Ikey is arrested and charged with theft and receiving stolen goods. He is committed for trial and held in the notorious Newgate Prison.</p> <p>Following a court appearance, en route back to Newgate, Ikey (aided by his father-in-law, who was driving the coach) escapes.</p>
April 1827	<p>Ikey flees London for New York. His escape from custody was prominent news throughout London, becoming the basis for songs, ditties and imaginative tales. The embarrassed police focus on Ikey's family.</p> <p>Officers arrest Ikey's wife, Ann, and charge her with receiving stolen goods. She is found guilty and sentenced to 14 years in Van Diemen's Land, Australia.</p> <p>Ann, and her four youngest children, are transported aboard the ship <i>Mermaid</i> to Van Diemen's Land. The journey takes four months.</p>
August 1827	<p>Ann is assigned as a domestic servant to a settler in Hobart. Her youngest child is permitted to stay with her, but her three oldest children are placed in an orphanage.</p> <p>In New York, Ikey learns of his wife and family's fate and sets sail for Hobart.</p> <p>Ikey arrives in Hobart and is joined by his two eldest sons. They open a tobacco shop/general store in Elizabeth Street.</p> <p>Despite his notoriety, Ikey had not broken any laws in Tasmania and could not be arrested without a warrant.</p>
February 1828	<p>Tasmanian Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur writes to England, requesting a warrant for Ikey's arrest.</p> <p>Ann quarrels with her mistress and is sent to Cascades, Tasmania's Female House of Correction. After several months imprisonment, she is released and assigned to Ikey's care.</p>



Viewing Activities

While viewing the film, complete the following character table for Ikey. This will assist you when completing other tasks:

Positive Actions and Traits

Example:

- Admits to being falsely released from the prison-hulk.

Negative Actions and Traits

Example:

- Pickpockets and receives stolen goods.



Viewing Activities

While viewing the film, complete the following character table for Ann. This will assist you when completing other tasks:

Positive Events in her life

Example:

- Meets and falls in love with Ikey.

Negative Events in her life

Example:

- Meets and falls in love with Ikey.



Life in London in the 1800s

Ann and Ikey married in 1807 and began their life together in Spitalfields, East London. Life in London in the early 1800s was harsh, and Ikey felt the only way he could make ends meet was to resort to crime.

Look at the images *The Rookery*, *St. Giles* and *Dudley Street, Seven Dials*. (note for design: please insert images Fagin 88 and Fagin 94 from the images pack for this activity).

Describe what these images present of city life in London at this time. Describe what is shown, and also imagine the sounds and smells that would have existed.



Crime and Punishment in London in the 1800s

Ikey was arrested for theft in 1810 and held aboard the prison-hulk *Zetland* on the Thames for six years.

Visit the following websites:

www.londonlives.org/static/Prisons.jsp#toc11

www.victorianlondon.org/prisons/hulks.htm

What was the purpose of the prison-hulks?

What were conditions like for those on board?

Activity: 'My darling Ann...'

Write a letter from Ikey to Ann, describing a typical 24 hours during his imprisonment on the *Zetland*.

Following his release in 1816, Ikey established a very successful career in dealing stolen goods. He was arrested in 1827 and placed in Newgate Prison. Most punishments at this time were held in public. Executions for theft were common and were designed to act as a deterrent to those who watched. Fearful of being executed, Ikey escaped from custody and fled to New York.

Visit www.city-of-london.com/newgate-prison.html and read about life in Newgate Prison and the public nature of punishment and execution in nineteenth century London.

Do you think Ikey's decision to flee to New York, leaving Ann and the children behind, was justifiable? Explain your response.



Ann's Transportation to Van Diemen's Land

In August 1827, Ann was arrested and charged with receiving stolen goods. She and her four youngest children were transported to Van Diemen's Land in January 1828, with the journey aboard the *Mermaid* taking four months.

Visit www.members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/convicts/res-08.html and read about conditions on board a transportation ship.

Activity: 'Dear Diary...'

Write a series of diary entries from Ann describing her journey. Include details about food, living quarters, daily activities, her children and her hopes and fears for life in Van Diemen's Land.

Life in Van Diemen's Land

Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) was established in 1803 as a penal colony. By the time Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur arrived in 1824, the island was extremely unsettled. He saw the island primarily as a gaol, and wanted to establish a harsh system of rule that would make Van Diemen's Land the most feared of all penal colonies. He was described as "ambitious, religious, severe and thorough".

The heart of everyone is desperately wicked

- Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur.





*The very day we landed upon the Fatal Shore,
The planters stood around us, full
twenty score or more;
They ranked us up like horses and sold
us out of hand,
They chained us up to pull the plough,
upon Van Diemen's Land.*
- convict ballad, circa. 1825-30.

Visit www.treasure-explorer.nla.gov.au/closerlook/rations-convicts-van-diemens-land and complete the activities on food rations for convicts in Van Diemen's Land.

The following websites will help with your research about convict life in Australia:

www.pilotguides.com/destination_guide/pacific/australia/convict_australia/convict_life.php

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/justice/convict/DoingTime/time.html

www.australianhistory.org/who-convicts

The following websites will help with your research about Ann's experience and time in Cascades Female Factory.

www.australianhistory.org/women-convicts

www.cascadefemalefactory.wordpress.com/history-2/

Activity: 'Dear Diary...'

Write a series of at least four diary entries from Ann about her life working for the Newmans in Hobart. Include her separation from her older children, her daily activities and the time spent in Cascades Female Factory.



Activity: 'Convict Biography'

Visit <http://www.convictcentral.com/> and click on 'Convict Tales'. Here you will find a list of convicts and an overview of their life. Select one and use them as the basis for a Convict Biography of your own. Include the following details:

Physical appearance.

- Characteristics (manner, habits, did they smoke/drink, did they commit multiple offences?).
- Punishment they received and their life in Australia.

Outcome: did they reform, learn new skills, receive a ticket-of-leave?

Ikey in Van Diemen's Land

Ikey heard of Ann's fate and arrived in Hobart in October 1828. Together with his two eldest sons, he established a legitimate business and had Ann assigned to his care. Despite attempting to make a fresh start, the warrant for his arrest arrived from London, and in 1830 Ikey was sent back to England to face trial at The Old Bailey.



Activity: 'Order in the court!'

You will be assigned to either the role of defending or prosecuting Ikey in his trial in Hobart in 1829. Using your notes from the Character Chart, prepare your case either for or against him.

Pair up with a student who has assumed the opposite position and each present your arguments. Have a third student act as 'judge' and deliver their verdict on whether Ikey should face trial back in London, or have the opportunity to forge a new life in Hobart.

Activity: '@ikeysolomon'

Using your research and notes, prepare a series of 10 Twitter 'tweets' from Ikey from the period of his initial escape from custody in 1827 through to his arrest in Hobart and return to London in 1830. Remember, a 'tweet' can be no longer than 140 characters.

Ikey Imprisoned

Ikey was sent back to England and faced trial at The Old Bailey. He was

found guilty of receiving stolen goods and transported back to Van Diemen's Land. In 1834, he was sent to the newly established Port Arthur Convict Settlement for bad behaviour.

Visit www.portarthur.org.au/ and research the purpose of Port Arthur and the conditions that convicts encountered there.

Activity: 'My darling Ann....'

Write a letter to Ann from Ikey describing his life at Port Arthur. Include details about food, daily activities,

punishment, treatment by the guards and solitary confinement.

Activity: 'Convict couture!'

In the film, Ikey complains about the prison uniforms. Visit www.treasure-explorer.nla.gov.au/treasure/convict-uniform/resources to learn more about convict uniforms of that time. Using this research and notes from the film, design an improved version of the male convict uniform. Think about the purpose of the uniform and the fabrics and dyes available at the time. Include a design and a brief statement of your choices.





Ikey and Ann reunited

Ikey was released in 1835 and permitted to live as a free man in New Norfolk, where he was reunited with Ann and their four youngest children. Sadly, their reunion was short-lived, with Ann and the children returning to live in Hobart.

Love can take you places you never dreamed of

-Ikey Solomon.

Are you surprised/saddened that Ikey and Ann did not stay together?

Who or what do you blame for this final outcome?

Do you think punishments in nineteenth century London and Australia served to reform or punish offenders?

Were there other options for Ikey besides turning to crime?

Were Ann, Ikey and their children better off in Van Diemen's Land or in London?

Was Ikey a product of the conditions and penal system, or was he simply 'bad'?

Between 1804 and 1853, 76,000 convicts were transported to Van Diemen's Land. Few have achieved such notoriety as Ikey Solomon. His story is indeed enthralling, although his legend has lived on due to Charles Dickens, who never revealed whether Ikey was his inspiration for the character of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*.

Activity: 'What the Dickens?'

Read *Oliver Twist* (or selected excerpts), highlighting sections about Fagin. Armed with your knowledge of Ikey Solomon's life, do you believe Dickens based this character on Ikey? Explain your response.



THE FIRST FAGIN
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P.O. Box 680,
Mitchell, ACT 2911
AUSTRALIA

Phone: (+61 2) 6248 0851
Fax: (+61 2) 6249 1640
E: admin@roninfilms.com.au
<http://www.roninfilms.com.au>



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PO Box 680, Mitchell
ACT 2911 AUSTRALIA
Ph: (02) 6248 0851
Ph: (02) 6249 1640
orders@roninfilms.com.au

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